

Orangeville Citizen

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The humblest Citizen of all the land, when clad in armour of a righteous cause,
is stronger than all the hosts of Error. - WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

Electric railways: everywhere but in Ontario?

SEARCH ON GOOGLE, using the phrase "electric railways and Ontario" will bring up a number of stories, few if any of which look to the future.

Rather, they look at the history, and the items that deal with current attractions in the province deal mainly with the Halton County Radial Railway, the tourist attraction near Rockwood that has a huge collection of retired streetcars, trolley buses and coaches that survived the end of the radial era.

Today, Toronto is the only city in the province that still has electrified public transit, and even there the city has long since abandoned its trolley bus system.

Interestingly, Ontario's abandonment of electricity as a means of moving people and goods has no parallel in Europe and most of the rest of the world.

A similar Google check, this time using the phrase "electric railways and Europe," produces an interesting statistic on the subject.

In 2006, 25 per cent (240,000 km) of the world's rail network was electrified and 50 per cent of all rail transport was carried by electric traction (both by locomotives and multiple units).

Particularly in Ontario, where most of the electricity comes from nuclear and hydraulic generating stations, the environmental benefits of rail electrification are surely obvious.

However, electrification of railways has other advantages, among them greater efficiency, with less weight and space being needed to produce the same power, and less power lost on grades and in warm weather.

As well, a rule of thumb is that the power range of diesel locomotives begins at the power of the strongest steam engines, while the power range of electric locomotives starts at the

high end of diesel locomotives. The strongest locomotives in the world are all electric, and Europe's fastest trains are pulled by electric locomotives.

In the circumstances, it's truly amazing that even today there's no talk of electrifying Canada's busiest rail corridor, between Montreal and Windsor, and the only long-term project even being considered would see some of the busiest GO Transit lines electrified.

But perhaps there will be some needed stimulus in a report last week from Toronto's medical officer of health that warns against using diesel locomotives for the planned upgrading of the CNR line between Toronto and Georgetown to handle not only full-day GO train service but express runs into Pearson International Airport.

Dr. David McKeown says the planned use of diesel locomotives on a line that may handle up to 400 passenger and freight trains a day will put the health of nearby residents at risk.

In a strong submission to Environment Minister John Gerretson, Dr. McKeown voiced his objections to the Metrolinx plan to use diesels to power both the expanded GO service and the new rail link to Pearson.

He wants to see the expansion, planned for 2015, proceed only as an electrified service. Metrolinx launched a study this summer on eventually converting the line to electric power, but has suggested any such change would be at least 15 years away.

Dr. McKeown finds increasing evidence that diesel exhaust is associated with various cancers, particularly lung cancer, and says using diesels will result in "increased air pollution and health risk in adjacent communities."

Such a finding should surely surprise no one, and the immediate reac-

tion by Metrolinx was disheartening.

Jim O'Mara, Metrolinx's executive lead for environmental policy and planning, said Dr. McKeown's comments raised technically complex issues, and the agency's consultants were taking a thorough look at them.

And he went on to assert that Metrolinx has examined the environmental issues very carefully and found that the impact on air quality "in reality is manageable."

Really? For one thing, there surely is nothing "technically complex" about electrifying a rail line. It's something that has been done fairly routinely for at least 100 years.

Is there any doubt that the poles and wiring could be erected while the required new trackage (to double-track at least as far as Brampton) is being installed?

As for the locomotives and rolling stock, Montreal-based Bombardier is routinely filling orders for such equipment from European railways and transit systems.

And what, pray tell, is meant by the assurance that pollution from the diesels would be "manageable"?

Something that should be remembered is that while ordinary rail lines cannot be used by electric vehicles, electrified lines can still be used by any form of locomotion.

In the case of the Toronto-Georgetown line, only the section between Georgetown and a point east of the GO Bramalea station carries high volumes of freight. Freight trains are seldom seen these days around Union Station or on the CN and CP lines that radiate out of it, the reason being that nearly all the freight goes to the suburban intermodal yards.

In the circumstances, electrification of the line is really a "no brainer."



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There should be an exemption

IS IT JUST OUR IMAGINATION, or have we been witnessing a lot more instances of drunk driving arrests recently in Dufferin and Caledon?

This week, a single press release from Caledon OPP told of no fewer than five such incidents having occurred between 8:45 p.m. last Friday and 11 p.m. Saturday.

But what struck us particularly was the fact that two of the five arrests came with the assistance of other motorists, one of whom not only reported the suspicious driving but followed the vehicle, reporting on its progress until it was intercepted by Caledon OPP officers.

The release didn't say, but we suspect, that the citizen's assistance was given despite the fact that he or she was in breach of Ontario's new law banning drivers' use of cell phones

unless they have a hands-free device or stop by the side of the road.

As sensible as the new law is as a means of improving highway safety, it should include an exemption for anyone who spots any dangerous driving, be it impaired driving, "stunt" driving (more than 50 km/h over the limit) or passing on the brow of a hill.

Granted, it's unlikely that police would lay a charge against anyone giving them such invaluable assistance. But legislating this slight change in the law would encourage more motorists to provide the assistance.

As for the rash of impaired driving incidents, we note approvingly that the charged drivers all had their licences suspended for 90 days under Ontario's new Administrative Drivers Licence Suspension program.

CITIZEN MAILBOX

Praise for economic development plan

After a year of serious economic hardship in Southern Ontario, it was good news to hear Prime Minister Harper announce plans recently for the area's own development agency. With a budget of a billion dollars to be spent over five years, we're looking forward to major infrastructure development as a result of the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario.

MP Gary Good year, Minister of State for Science and Technology, has been put in charge of the new agency. From his Cambridge riding and the agency office in Kitchener, we expect he will have a good understanding of where agriculture can contribute to sus-

tainable economic development for the area.

Prime Minister Harper, in making the announcement, said he expects to see as little of the one billion dollars as possible used on bureaucracy - leaving the bulk of the money for programming. We definitely support that approach.

Acknowledging the loss of more than 200,000 jobs in Southern Ontario in recent months, Prime Minister Harper wants to see MP Good year and his agency at work turning things around in Southern Ontario.

The good news is that we know investment in agriculture and agriculture infrastructure pays dividends. Such investment will certainly help turn

around our rural and provincial economy.

The plan calls for the investment of millions of dollars through a variety of programs, most of them already existing, for research. Agriculture looks forward to working with Minister Goodyear and his agency to explore opportunities for farmers and others in the agri-food sector. We want to use every opportunity possible to create more optimism for success in agriculture.

Using production efficiencies created through research, agriculture has reached the stage where society counts on farmers for a lot more than just food. Society looks to modern agriculture for a reduction in its reliance on fossil fuels and a reduction in greenhouse gases.

Increased production capabilities now permit farmers to produce food and feed well beyond their own needs. An

increasing amount of output from today's farm is being used to produce energy, both transportation fuels and electricity. Again, research has brought agriculture to these capabilities. It is now imperative for us to capitalize on the possibilities using this new agency.

Agriculture is also showing increased abilities in the production of industrial feedstocks for everything from starches to oils and fibre. Making use of the abilities and imagination of research workers, we're confident the horizons for agriculture will reach even greater levels for service to society.

A recent report from Ontario Agri-Food Technologies discusses a number of areas where agriculture's capabilities for growth and contribution to modern society are unlimited. A major limiting factor, accord-

• Please turn to page A6

Industries not assured of rail service: OBRAG

We would like to respond to a letter written by Thomas Kelly, concerning the Highlands Group of Companies, their possible acquisition of the rail line, and the continued use of rail service in Orangeville by the companies that depend on its use.

We represent OBRAG, which stands for the Orangeville Brampton Rail Access Group, consisting of the following companies: Clorox, PolyOne, Roehling, Delta Companies Group, Holmes Agro, Industrial Thermo Polymers and Unical. Our consortium represents companies which employ hundreds of people in Orangeville and surrounding areas and we are dependent on rail service to remain competitive in our respective markets. Ever since the rail line was acquired by the town (ORDC) from CP Rail in 2000, OBRAG has been responsible for the maintenance and upgrading to the line and is spending over \$500,000 each year on the line in order to ensure that it is safe for commercial freight movements. The cost of paying CANDO as well as the maintenance and upgrades to the line have been OBRAG's responsibility by agreement with the town.

When we heard that the town of Orangeville was intending to sell the line for \$7,000,000 to the Highlands Group of Companies we considered the prospect of another major line user to be very positive news. We have, however,

repeatedly asked for some assurance from both the Orangeville Town Council and Highlands that we, OBRAG, would continue to have access to the line. This assurance has not been provided. It is interesting to note that the sight-seeing train, which contributes nothing towards maintenance and upkeep of the line, was given assurance that they would have continued access to the line.

This original agreement with the Town and OBRAG will expire in September 2010. In the meantime, OBRAG continues to make significant maintenance investments in the line which have a useful life beyond our promised access to the line.

We are extremely concerned that we will be deprived of rail service. Loss of rail service will have a significant impact on the viability of our local manufacturing operations and employment.

In addition, losing the rail access would result in hundreds of additional trucks moving in and out of town which has a greater negative impact on the environment and will cause more traffic congestion, and possible safety issues.

Consequently, we continue to appeal to the Town and the Highlands Group to address our concerns and the concerns of the residents we employ and the drivers who would be sharing roads with hundreds of additional trucks.

Steve Hartman, Chairman
OBRAG

Concerns about HST

I consider that the news media have been somewhat remiss in determining that full negative impact of costs to the taxpayers when the Liberal Government introduces an HST sometime in August 2010.

Although there have been numerous reports pertaining to some concessions that the government would apply to purchases related to real estate and other specific items that are designed to pacify some taxpayer concerns, no one has bothered to determine the true negative impact when it is applied to commercial rental properties.

For example, most businesses and office operations in the province rent their premises from other owners or companies who are required to collect and pay the present 5% GST to the government. With the introduction of a harmonized GST/PST, all these business operations will be required to pay a further 8% for a total of 13% on their premises.

Furthermore, the province recently conducted and introduced a complete reevaluation of all properties which will substantially increase most values and municipal revenues without increasing the existing MIL rates over the next few years.

Furthermore, when these municipalities determine that expenses require another MIL

rate increase, then property taxes will again be applied to the new evaluations.

As a result, most property owners will probably increase the rents to compensate them when they pay these additional taxes. This in turn will result in a substantial and further increase in the price of most products and services within the province and provide the McGuinty Government with even more tax revenues, which could probably exceed another billion dollars in this one area alone.

It is interesting to note and question the reasons why this new tax is proposed for August 2010 when the provincial election is called shortly after in 2011.

I suggest that his will enable the Liberal government to introduce more campaign giveaways in their quest for re-election.

Since this government was elected we have all been subjected to numerous tax increases, which they originally promised would not occur if they were elected. Naturally, circumstances have changed in recent years, especially during this time of recession, resulting in government costs and tax increases, but surely there must be some constructive limitations on further tax increases when people are already struggling to make ends meet.

M. Bradshaw
Proton Station

Keeping it in the family

The population of Orangeville and environs is made up of extraordinary folk. There are a disproportionately large number of artists of every medium, from hands-on visual artists and craftsmen of every kind, to writers, singers, actors, theatre crafters.

Theatre Orangeville, along with the long list of theatre-related groups, would struggle to survive without the constant flow of donations and enthusiastic attendance to the many entertainments on the part of the public and corporations.

There are wise businessmen and hard-working politicians; there is a skilful and caring association of medical professionals, social workers and people who simply do give a damn about kids in trouble, the elderly and the abused.

Whenever they can, the businesses in this community pitch in to support events of all sorts from sports to theatre and entertainments to fund raisers for compassionate causes.

And this is what the whole community in this region has in common: its compassion. When a family suffers from disaster through the loss of their home, accident or illness, where there is deprivation, this community puts on dances, shows, dinners, to bring in funds in support of the recently afflicted.

When our home in the Hockley Valley went down in flames in 2007, friends established a trust fund for us into which a lot of money - in large and little amounts - was deposited anonymously over several months to assist us.

Whenever we are inclined to feel badly about our losses in the fire, we always recall the generosity of this community and our pain is salvaged by the recollection.

There was massive support through a variety of functions for young Katy Wymant, the little girl from Orangeville who was diagnosed with cancer and later died in Scotland. She was too ill to come back to Canada, so her parents stayed with her, without regard for their loss of income, for a whole year. This community staged fund raisers throughout that time to support the Wymants in their sad plight.

There are many opportunities to remember Choices Youth Shelter, Family Transition Place for abused women (and their children), and Hospice Dufferin, all of which deal with and tend to those the rest of us can too easily forget but to which we can make our offerings however slim.

Still, something else, something additional is growing in the minds of people here - how to be involved, how to be personally engaged.

Over the last two weeks, I have had extremely interesting conversations with successful businessmen, both middle-aged, one of whom is (sort of) retired, Bob Burnside, and Stephen White. The conversations were interviews for the articles I've written in the last two edi-

tions of this esteemed journal.

And both men said the same thing - I thought I was hearing an echo - "You have to give back. It's important to be personally involved - it is no longer enough to just hand out some money."

The new expression, "sweat equity",

came up. Is this the road for the "boomer generation"? I am so sick of pictures of smiling, smiling grey-haired, prosperous looking men and women engaging in their post-lifetime activities - expensive leisure sports, elegant glasses of wine - as though we are absolutely useless and totally self-indulgent by the time we reach our "sort of" retirement years.

What about sweat equity in those same years? What about getting personally involved? What about building houses for homes for humanity?

Who says we can't volunteer to work at some level abroad - or take the wisdom of our years to advise others (younger) how to work more effectively in places where such knowledge is needed but can't be afforded?

All those years of learning how things are best done - all that knowledge - why should they go to waste simply because Boomers are told that they are only good for smiling (those photos are just so silly!) and lapping up the good times, with no thought for the rest of humanity. On the contrary, as Mr. Burnside and Mr. White told me, this is the time to give back.

On Sunday, September 13, there is to be a Charity Motorcycle Ride taking off from The Deck pub on Orangeville's Mill Street. If you are a person, grey-haired or otherwise, with a motorcycle, you could be involved. If you are not a person with a motorcycle, you could probably still be involved or just come for the fun, or contribute as a sponsor, or learn about other projects with which you could help.

The Motorcycle Ride is to raise funds for yet another family in distress - the Boltons of Orangeville. Here again are parents determined to stand by their sick child, Kaitlin, who is suffering from MDL, a neuro degenerative disease that should have killed her long ago except for the dedication of her parents.

Orangeville will pull together for her too, I have no doubt. That is the kind of fine community it is.

However we feel about the mistakes our politicians make, whatever other faults or failings there are to living here, one thing is certain: this is a most caring and compassionate community. It is remarkable. And yet, it is Canadian in all the best and truest sense of the word.



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Constance Scrafield-Danby